

Sixth Month Race & Qualifying Report / Inevitably "IT" had to Happen!!!

Well, this was the first Friday qualifying round for the big Toyota 200 race out at Willow Springs in October. I planned ahead and asked for the day off from work, as my times from last month, a best lap of 1:28.99, had me confidently entering my bike and self in the running for making the field. As it turned out, I am a prophet!!!



Now for the story behind the not so final result. 🤪

Wednesday night was almost completely sleepless, as I replayed every turn, throttle motion, break point, rear tire slide feeling, 🚗 weight shifting, and lap that I had already turned out at Willow Springs in the past 5 months. That took almost the entire night. Then I began to think of all the turns I had just taken at my newest track experience two weeks ago at California Speedway, on the AMA course. 🤝 17 left hand turns and 3 right hand turns each lap. I had gained more experience than I would ever know from my track day at Fontana until I did my first few laps back on Willow's 6 right hand turns, and 3 left hand turned race track.

Thursday at work, it was almost unbearable to do anything but think of the joys to be had the next day, qualifying for the Toyota 200. I made it through Thursday by getting all my ducks in a row for an early beginning to the three-day weekend. Finally, I left work to get in our RV and tow my race bike and trailer to Willow Springs for the weekend. 8)

Since my daughter had just started Elementary school, and my wife is now 13 weeks pregnant with our third child, 🚗 they, Jodie, Josephine, and Sebastian would not come up to see daddy at the racetrack until after school. Qualifying would be at 3:30 p.m., leaving them plenty of time to make it out to track to see daddy do his very best for one 30 minute qualifying session. 🤝

As luck would have it, I was able to get into the track on Thursday night, since most of the time it is forbidden. I like to show up early, get set up and be ready without having to rush. I was able to do this and made the beginning of my weekend more relaxing.

Friday morning came quick, and I had gotten a fairly good night's rest, as compared to the night before. My pre-thought on Wednesday night made sleeping the 7 hours on Thursday night that much easier. I teched my bike at 7:00 a.m. and began the wait for the first timed qualifying session to begin around 10:40 a.m.

Friday's temperatures were mild with a very slight breeze to cool the high 80° weather to a mid-80's day. I entered the track with much anticipation to the day's unfolding event, qualifying for the Toyota 200. I made a few quick laps to scrub my brand new tires then proceeded to follow Stuman (#16) for a couple of "HIS" laps. 🚗 Stuart's qualifying time was a 1:26.492. 🤝 I made a few quick glances at my lap timer after crossing the start/finish line and before sucking my gel seat into my rectal orifice from late braking turn 1, 🚗 only to see magical numbers start to appear. First I saw a strange but once seen before 28, then a couple more of this now familiar number but with decreasing decimal place digits. After late breaking and passing Stuart into turn 1 and then proceeding to almost run out of dirt to ride in between 1 and 2, 🚗 I decided to stay behind him for more schooling. 🤝

All of a sudden without warning, with the greatest of ease, and less than the normal amount of sphincter strain, a 1:27.830. This number was confirmed with my fastest timed qualifying transponder reading of 1:27.860. 30/100 of second difference between my \$145 used lap timer, and a \$350 certified professional racing transponder, supplied to me by Willow Springs for official timing purposes. Not to say that was my personally recorded fastest lap, but it was the one the transponder recorded.

The very next lap had Stu pull a 1:26.9 on his lap timer and my lap timer read an amazingly fast 1:27.100!!! 🚫🚫🚫 I was just a mere 1/10 of a second from dipping my lap times into the unfathomable 26's. I was filled instantly with a feeling of being as great as Valentino himself, but as you all know, my name is MARCEL NOT VALENTINO!!! 😬😬 Stu pulled off of the track on the next lap, as he knew he could wait for the crowds to pass and give it another try in the ever so long 30 minute timed practice. I, on the other hand, took this opportunity to make sure that I could go just as fast without being towed to a fast lap.

I crossed the start/finish lap once again and began the assault on turns 1-9 without my lead blocker. Pucker in turn 1 felt about right. Fast but slightly out of control. Good, now drive it into turn 2 and feed the gas just slightly more than I want to, so I can maintain the last lap's speed through the corner. Now came the important "SLOW" part of the track, turns 3-5. I approached turn 3 just as I had when following Stu, but something was different, he wasn't there. I fed the gas a little more and felt the rear give a little. Like an ice skater over-rotating a double sow-cow, the rear of the bike began to give more input as to where I was going than my front tire. I stayed on the gas, only thinking positive thoughts of saving this minor slide. After the steering was at full lock facing up the hill towards turn 4a, did I have the slightest doubt that I may not be able to save it? Apparently, my rear tire had had enough of these shenanigans, and made it clear as day that I would be experiencing my first track day incident. I had rode the slide quite a ways, maybe 50-75 feet farther than most would have tried, by the time my bike started to spin on it's left side up the hill, directly in the middle of the racetrack, just as I had planned. I made like a baseball player sliding into home to beat the throw, and finally tumbled a bit.

Immediately, I got up and ran off the track towards the corner worker. He couldn't believe that I had stayed with the slide as long as I did and really wondered why I was so enthusiastically excited about crashing. I told him, I am not happy to have crashed, but that I had just made up 2 seconds a lap over last month's time of 1:28.99 to my now fastest lap of 1:27.100!!! 🚫 Thanks Stuart. 🤝

I jumped into the crash truck and got the same strange reaction to my obviously interesting joy filled enthusiasm after crashing. I explained my feelings with words like, incredible, unbelievable, awesome, and some other descriptors. 🙌🚫😬😬

My bike and I were dumped at tech and passed on the spot. Almost no damage for a low side at about racing speed through turn 3.

I was as amazed as anyone. I felt euphoric yet contained my willingness to do the same thing only minutes later by going back on the track after my crash. I waited to do battle with the Big Track until the afternoon practice.

The second timed practice had no readings from our transponders and just as well. Mentally I could not get any faster than a few mid-28's. I knew the crash had happened and tried to forget about it, but my mind played just enough tricks on my body not to be able to go any faster.

The last time I entered the track on Friday was just after my wife and kids arrived. I was calmly describing the day's events to them as I heard my final call to enter the track for my qualifying session. I had made up my mind that I would not follow anyone on this very critical timed session. Also, I would do two fast laps, so the transponder would not miss my all out effort to qualify for the Toyota 200. My lap timer did not work at all during the last round of laps for qualifying, so I was flying without radar. :dwn: I went what I thought were two fast laps, mostly they felt slow, kind of strange how it works, but it does. I came in to get some hydration, but found out there was only about 5 minutes left to qualify, so my two "slow" laps were going to be it for this day.

I felt good and waited to see what times were posted. I apparently got quite a bit of announcer time, as I was the only ROOKIE trying to qualify for the Toyota 200. 😬 Then, my time was posted. 23rd out of the 29 that tried, with a time of 1:28.036. 😊 If this were last year I would definitely be in the show, by a whole 3/10 of a second. I am in the show, for now, and will show up next month to put up an even faster time to assure my position with 100% confidence, and no crashes to conflict with going fast. 👍

Qualifying was great and my speed was confirmed even more within the three races on Sunday. Almost all of my laps were of the 1:27 something. I didn't follow anyone; I just tried to catch them, like the carrot in front of the rabbit. 😬

The first race of Sunday I was gridded 11th of 13. I finished 6th. I had only two moments of pure excitement in all of my three races and this race provided both of them. On the first lap, after following #227 through turns 4a and 4b, we proceeded to dive into turn 5.

I was blindly following my man when he decided that the new speed limit was going to be much, much less than any other turn on the normal roads of California, less than 15 M.P.H.!!! 🚫 I had to test the full capabilities of my front braking system, as well as the excrement loading ability of my leathers. 😬 Both worked almost better than I could have hoped for. My brakes had me doing a stoppie into the entrance of turn 5, while still leaning to the left to make the turn. I then proceeded to go extremely wide on the exit of turn 5. Unbelievably, no one passed me after this total annihilation of turn 5 in the worst way. During my recovery of this slight blunder, or loss of concentration, I decided I needed to be in front of #227 so I would have no more of these encounters. Turn 8 was the perfect opportunity to make my pass. His suspension was not set up as well as mine and I rode right around him on the outside of turn 8. That was the last time I saw #227, well, until he passed me in the

next two races. That was what was weird, he was much faster in the second and third race, but for some reason, he wasn't ready to race that first one of Sunday.

On to the second lap adventure. Let me preface this with the qualification of how much I love turn 8. It is super fast and you can make up substantial time on people there if you just sack up and keep the throttle open just a little longer than you think you should. 🤪 Lap two of the first race had my rear tire slide out a little more than I ever cared for it to in turn 8. I lost the footing of my inside, right foot, from it's normally completely unstuck ball of foot to peg connection. As I tried to recover from the slide and at the same time keep a good handle on not dragging my right foot under the right side of my 1000, I noticed that my line through turn 8 was almost perfect. 👍 I struggled to reposition my right foot on the peg, also noticing that my right knee had been sliding on the asphalt for most of this debacle. Since my mind had taken complete control of my body, I just went with the flow of events and before needing to turn sharper to the right to make it through turn 9, I had repositioned my right foot, spotted the apex cone of turn 9, and gave just enough gas and handle bar control to negotiate the last turn of lap 2 almost without any negative repercussions of my total lack of footing in turn 8.

The next four laps blurred past my mind in a fury of crossed flags, a myriad of four 1:27 lap times, 👍 rear end puckering corner entries, 🚫 and finally a 6th place finish with a sizable gap in front as well as behind my finishing position. 😊 I was completely spent, but fully rewarded by my two days prior practice and high-speed experiences. 👍 Since my brother had ridden his Hayabusa down the day before, I had him snap a few shot of my bike and me in full battle glory.

Thanks Tony for capturing my racing experiences in the digital media. 👍 I hope you enjoyed the races as much as I enjoy performing them.

The next two races had me exhibiting similar speed and recklessness. I managed to start 11th of 14 in the second race and pull myself to 6th for the last lap of this race as I did in the first race. Consistently lapping Willow Springs in the middle of the 27's made me more confident for the last race of the day, a race that pays Suzuki contingency money. 👍

By the time the last race came, race number 9 of the day, I had another 9th starting position in a field of 12. I made the best of my position and newly acquired corner speeds to pass most of the field. 🤪 My best finish so far this year with the really fast guys came in this race, as I place 4th. 👍 Not only making money from Suzuki, but also from Dunlop. 👍 I had been 5th for most of the laps, as I have made up about two seconds a lap from last month, but the faster guys have also gotten just a bit faster. I followed with the intentions of a cheetah stocking its prey for dinner, but they were just a hair too fast for me to catch. In the favorite corner of most to dump their bikes, one of my fellow competitors, Stoney Landers crashed. He was one of the four that were in the lead group in front of me, and with two laps to go, he went dirt racing. I now had to hold onto my best finish by holding off those behind me for one and a half more laps. I never look back, and had I, I would have known I had a sizeable gap and would comfortably finish 4th. I charged the last lap and a half with a couple more 27's and my weekend was complete. 😊👍🤪

My personal goals were reached this weekend, I placed very well into the top ten in all three of my races, 👍 became not only a full EXPERT, but I will be PRO licensed by

the Toyota 200, 🏆 qualified for the 200, made it into the very elite speed kings of Willow by almost running a 26, 27.1 is that close, 😬 and an added bonus is that I got my first wreck out the way with almost no damage or injury. This weekend was AWESOME!!! 🙌 😄 😬

I must thank my family, and soon to be addition 🏆 for cheering for me. Thank you Jodie, Josephine, Sebastian, number 3, my brother Tony, and everyone else that helped in their own way. 🙌 I must also thank Jerry at the Pirelli tire booth for letting me try out an awesome set of tires during Saturday practice. I will be back, thanks. 🙌 I look forwards to seeing some more of you out there next month for the big race, should be a great weekend of speed and controlled mayhem on motorcycles. Thanks for reading.

Marcel